

March 1, 2021

Dear Sir or Madam,

I am Christina Morris of Madison, CT. I'm writing to you today to support HB 6517.

My daughter was diagnosed with dyslexia in fifth grade after years of turmoil, agitation, and tears. Only after a referral to Madison Youth and Family Services due to my daughter's pervasive anxiety did a social worker advise me to make a parental request to the school district to test her. Only then was my daughter's dyslexia diagnosed. That's right, it was a social worker who realized that there was an underlying learning issue and not any of her five elementary teachers.

Included in the Task Force's recommendations are provisions for teacher training to assist with the identification of dyslexia. Because of her late diagnosis, our family had to take it upon ourselves to pay for private Orton Gillingham instruction. Madison is one of the wealthier towns in this State and supports our public schools, yet that made no difference in my daughter's diagnosis or assistance with her dyslexia. You can throw money at school districts all day long but if teachers are not trained to recognize dyslexia then kids will not be identified and they will not receive the same education as other students.

Now in seventh grade, my daughter still struggles. The private tutoring has helped her tremendously and her school assists her with other subjects. My daughter's attitude toward her education is realistic and revealing. When teachers post platitudes on papers, bulletin boards, lockers such as, "Believe in Yourself!" "You Can Do It!" "Today is Your Day" or "You've Got This." My daughter's reaction is complete cynicism. For a dyslexic student, it's impossible to read if you just "believe" you can. Dyslexic students need a structured literacy program and educators who know how to identify and teach dyslexic students.

Thank you for taking the time to read my testimony and please consider HB 6517.

Sincerely,
Christina Morris
Madison, CT